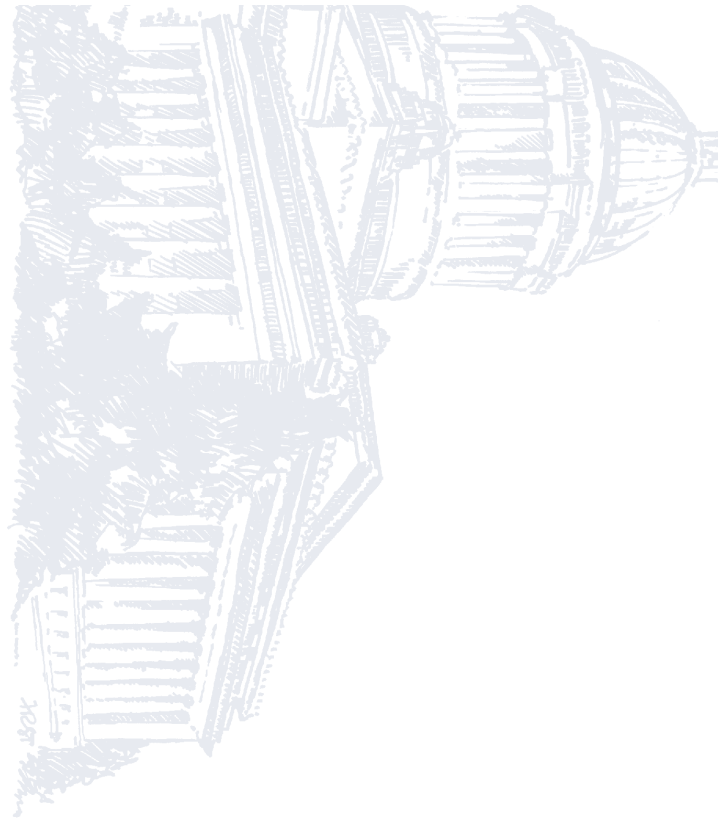




Rep. Geoff Simpson
47th District
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

2001 Session Report

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Representative
Geoff Simpson
47th District

2001 Session Report

Dear neighbors,

How many times have you been stuck in traffic lately? If there's one problem we all have in common, it's gridlock.

I don't know a single friend or neighbor who enjoys starting their day by fighting traffic, working eight (or more) hours, then getting out of the office only to stare at somebody else's bumper stickers while the highway turns into a parking lot.

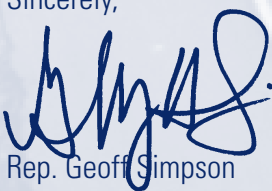
This newsletter is my chance to tackle the transportation problem with you. Inside, you'll find out:

- How we got into this traffic mess; and
- Our options to get things moving again.

I'd like to know what you think. Which reform ideas make the most sense? How do you get around every day? So at the end of this newsletter is a short section for you to share your thoughts with me. I look forward to reading your comments.

It's an honor and a privilege to serve as your representative. As always, I welcome your thoughts on how to better serve the 47th District.

Sincerely,


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Common-sense solutions to our traffic problems

Traffic 101

It's no secret why our highways are clogged.

1. Our booming economy brought more growth and cars to the same-sized highways.
2. Inflation and conflicting initiatives cut transportation funding far below our state's growing needs.
3. The transportation system is complicated and hard to change.



Growth brought gridlock

Our booming economy gave us good jobs and growth, but it also brought sprawl and traffic gridlock.

We've got some of the nation's worst traffic now, with congestion costing \$2 billion a year in lost productivity alone.

More than any other state in the union, Washington depends on international trade. That means getting goods from every corner of our state to markets all over the world. So gridlock poses a real threat to our state's prosperity.

Congestion also hurts individuals and small businesses. If gridlock means a plumber can get to three jobs a day instead of four jobs, that plumber has to raise prices just to keep up. And there are other costs, such as more pollution and the lost time with families that can never be replaced.

| Year | Population | Miles driven each day |
|------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1980 | 4.1 million | 78.5 million |
| 2000 | 5.8 million | 147.8 million |
| 2020 | 7.45 million | 197.3 million |

Sources: Department of Transportation and Office of Financial Management, Nov. 2000

Inflation and political problems

Inflation and political indecision have hamstrung efforts to fix the transportation mess.

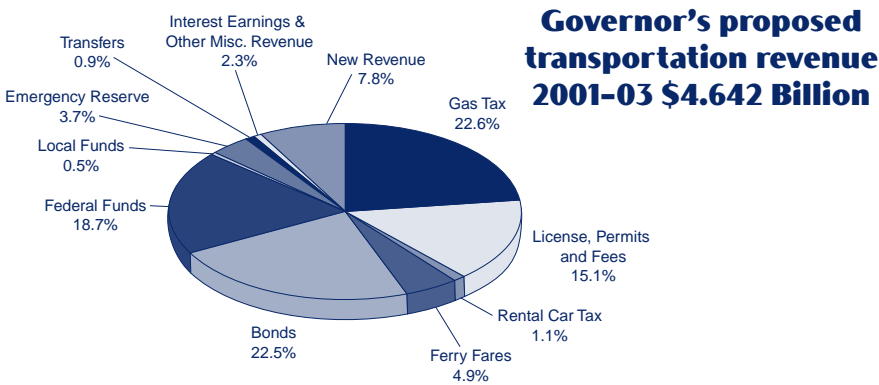
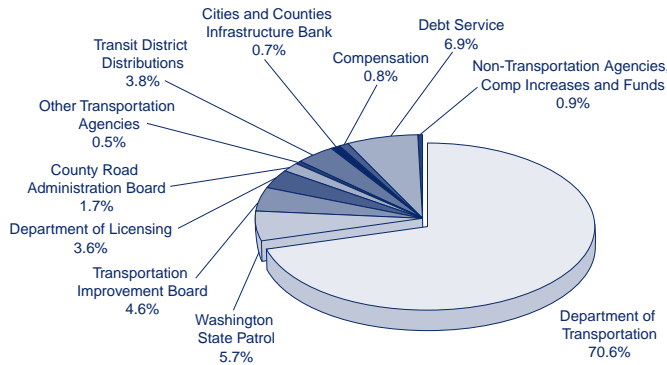
Over the next twenty years, our state will need \$100 billion to keep the transportation system moving. All the transportation money coming in for the cities, counties and state will only be enough to pay half that bill.

A tangled web

The state is only one player in the transportation game. Each city controls and maintains its streets; 39 counties run their own roads; and the federal government controls the interstate highways.

The state Department of Transportation has to play middleman, working with all the players so the system meshes and works as a unit.

Governor's proposed transportation spending 2001-03 \$4.642 Billion



Reforming the system

The Blue Ribbon Commission of citizens and experts studied our traffic problems for two years. The Commission delivered its report — including ideas on reforming our system — on Dec. 1, 2000.

I've read the Blue Ribbon report (<http://www.brct.wa.gov/>) and it's got a lot of good ideas for cleaning up our system and making it work.

Blue Ribbon reforms:

1. **Accountability** — Right now, the Transportation Commission appoints the state's Secretary of Transportation. The Blue Ribbon Commission suggests boosting accountability by making the governor responsible for transportation. The governor would be able to hire or fire the Secretary of Transportation and the current Transportation Commission would switch its focus to improving the performance of the transportation system.
2. **Efficiency** — Track performance by using benchmarks to measure our transportation system, and create incentives to improve performance and efficiency. Also: hold administrative costs to the lowest level and speed up projects by streamlining permits and cutting red tape.
3. **Prioritize** — We should figure out what projects matter most, and identify which programs aren't needed. Then, savings from program cuts should get redirected to our top priority projects.

Other reform ideas

1. **Keep spending local** — Instead of putting all of the taxpayers' money into a big pot and distributing it statewide, we could keep our tax dollars — and the decision-making — local. That way, we get to decide where our money should get spent.
2. **Fast toll lanes in King County** — Like HOV lanes, except people could pay a toll to use them without having a passenger.
3. **Encourage public-private partnerships** — The state and private businesses can work together to get projects completed faster. One example: the Intel facility and new I-5 overpass south of Tacoma.
4. **Cheap can be smart** — The most expensive way of moving people from Point A to Point B is by having people drive alone on highways, and having everybody on the highway at the same times of the day. To ease the burden on taxpayers, we should encourage anything that's less expensive than building new lanes of highway: staggered work schedules, carpooling, vanpooling, telecommuting, taking the bus, riding the train or biking to work. Anything that'll ease the load from our highways will save us all time and money.

What do you think?

How do you get around?

- ☐ Car ☐ Bus ☐ Carpool ☐ Vanpool
☐ Bicycle ☐ Walk ☐ Telecommute

How long is your commute? (one way)

- ☐ Less than 15 minutes ☐ Up to 30 minutes
☐ Up to an hour ☐ More than an hour

What reforms make the most sense? (pick your top three)

- ☐ Boost accountability by making the governor responsible for transportation
☐ Keep transportation spending local
☐ Increase efficiency through benchmarks and incentives for high performance
☐ Encourage public-private partnerships
☐ Prioritize projects, then use savings from program cuts for those top priorities
☐ Fast toll lanes in King County
☐ Encourage cheap alternatives such as staggered work schedules and carpooling

After new reforms and efficiencies are enacted, which options would you support for needed transportation improvements?

- ☐ Boost license permits and fees ☐ Use sales taxes on auto parts and equipment for roads
☐ Increase the gas tax ☐ Add a sales tax on gasoline sales
☐ Borrow more through state bonds ☐ No new money for transportation

☐ Yes, I'd like to receive issue updates by e-mail.

My address is: _____